

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 MOSCOW 0865

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PARM, UR, US, ET, IR, SA, XF, XJ
SUBJECT: KORNIYENKO ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS, CONVENTIONAL ARMS
TRANSFERS, THE HORN OF AFRICA, IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA

1. DURING ONE-HOUR JANUARY 16 CALL ON FIRST DEPUTY FOREIGN
MINISTER KORNIYENKO, DAS LUERS, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY
CHARGE AND POL COUNSELOR, OPENED BY EXPRESSING APPRECIATION
FO R THE WAY IN WHICH THE SOVIET SIDE HAD HANDED THE CURRENT
VISITS OF SENATOR STEVENSON AND HIMSELF. LUERS SAID HE
CAME AWAY WITH IMPRESSION THAT BOTH SIDES SEEMED DETERMINED
TO SEEK COOPERATION ON MAJOR ISSUES IN US-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP.
BUT HE NOTED WITH SOME CONCERN RECENT SOVIET PRESS
ATTACKS DIRECTED PERSONALLY AT PRESIDENT CARTER (REMARKS
ON THE SOMALI-ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT) AND AT DR. BRZEZINSKI
(COMMENTS ON THE VIETNAM-KAMPUCHEA CONFLICT). THE
SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION LED TO AN EXTENDED EXCHANGE ON
THE HORN OF AFRICA WHICH KORNIYENKO CLEARLY DESIRED
TO PURSUE.

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2. STATING THAT SOVIET SIDE WAS STRIVING FOR NOT
JUST NORMAL BUT GOOD "AS PRACTICALLY POSSIBLE"
RELATIONS, KORNIYENKO SAID THAT HE WAS OPTIMISTIC
THAT IF BOTH SIDES PROCEEDED ON THE BASIS OF FULL
EQUALITY AND MUTUAL BENEFIT, WE COULD ACHIEVE REALLY
GOOD RELATIONS. HOWEVER, HE WANTED TO UNDERSCORE
THE NECESSITY FOR AN APPROACH BASED ON GENUINE FULL

EQUALITY RATHER THAN UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE. AS FOR SOVIET PRESS CRITICISM OF THE PRESIDENT'S AND BRZEZINSKI'S REMARKS, KORNIYENKO SAID THEY WERE NOT MEANT AS PERSONAL ATTACKS. HOWEVER, IN CASES SUCH AS THESE WHERE THE SOVIETS ENCOUNTER STATEMENTS WHICH THEY CONSIDER "INCORRECT AND NOT AIMED AT IMPROVING RELATIONS" THEY WOULD RESPOND WITH CRITICISM. THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKED THAT THE SOVIETS WERE FACILITATING MILITARY ACTION BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIAN AND SOMALIS, "AND THIS WAS NOT TRUE." "WE TRIED EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO PREVENT TOTAL CONFLICT. WHEN OUR EFFORTS FAILED AND THE SOMALIS RESORTED TO MILITARY AGGRESSION WE ACTED AGAINST IT. WE ARE AGAINST AGGRESSION AND FOR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND IN THIS SENSE WE ARE HELPING ETHIOPIA TO FIGHT AGGRESSION. BUT TO SAY THAT WE DELIBERATELY STARTED IT AND ARE SENDING IN OUR (SOLDIERS) OR CUBANS TO FIGHT IS WRONG AND WE'LL SAY SO. REGARDING BRZEZINSKI'S STATEMENTS, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT, WHEN HE SAYS IT'S LIKE A CHINESE-SOVIET PROXY WAR?" LUERS AND CHARGE CLOSED SUBJECT OF PRESS COVERAGE BY REMARKING THAT IT WAS ONE THING TO REBUT A STATEMENT AND ANOTHER THING TO INDULGE IN PERSONAL CHARACTERIZATIONS.

3. RECALLING THAT SECRETARY VANCE HAD RECENTLY
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DISCUSSED THE HORN OF AFRICA WITH DOBRYNIN, LUERS SAID HE WANTED TO APPROACH THE MATTER IN TERMS OF OUR RESPECTIVE APPROACHES TO THIRD WORLD CONFLICTS IN GENERAL AND CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS TO THOSE AREAS IN PARTICULAR. AS OUTLINED BY LES GELB TO KHLESTOV IN THE RECENT CAT TALKS, THE US BELIEVES THAT BOTH SIDES SHOULD PROHIBIT OR RESTRICT ARMS SHIPMENTS TO THIRD WORLD AREAS WHERE THEIR VITAL INTERESTS ARE NOT INVOLVED AND WHERE SUCH SHIPMENTS MIGHT FUEL LOCAL CONFLICTS. SUCH WAS OUR POSITION IN THE HORN, WHEREAS IT WAS SELF-EVIDENT THAT SOMALIA WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN IN A POSITION TO ATTACK ETHIOPIA HAD IT NOT FOR MANY YEARS ENJOYED HEAVY ARMS SUPPLIES AND FULL MILITARY SUPPORT FROM THE USSR. THE SOVIETS HAD THEN SWITCHED THEIR SUPPORT TO ETHIOPIA AND IN SO DOING APPEARED TO BE:

- SUPPLYING SO MANY WEAPONS AS TO ENSURE A LONG, BLOODY CONFLICT;
- INTRODUCING WEAPONS SYSTEMS WHICH THE ETHIOPIANS WERE UNABLE TO HANDLE THUS RAISING THE DISTINCT POSSIBILITY OF THEIR BEING MANNED BY SOVIET AND CUBAN PERSONNEL AND THEREBY CAUSING GREAT CONCERN

AMONG THE US CONGRESS AND PUBLIC;

--SEEKING AS IN ANGOLA TO INFLUENCE THE INTERNAL
STRUCTURE AND SHPE THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF A KEY
AFRICAN COUNTRY WHICH IS NOW UNDERGOING A PERIOD
OF INTERNAL UPHEAVAL AND CHANGE.

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4. IN RESPONSE KORNIYENKO SAID:

--ETHIOPIA HAS NO INTENTION OF INVADING SOMALIA
(LUERS INTERJECTED THAT ETHIOPIAN PLANES HAD MADE
AIR INCURSIONS INTO SOMALIA AND THAT SOVIET EXPERIENCE
WITH SUPPLYING ARMS TO SOMALIA SHOULD TEACH
THEM THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT OVER
HOW RECIPIENTS USE SOVIET ARMS.);

--IN THEIR EARLIER EFFORTS TO PREVENT CONFLICT
SOVIETS HAD LEARNED FROM SIAD BARRE THAT ON BASIS
OF UNOFFICIAL COMMENTS BY US OFFICIALS HE THOUGHT
HE WOULD GET US HELP AGAINST ETHIOPIA;

--ALTHOUGH SOMALIS OCCUPIED ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY
US DID NOT SPEAK OUT AGAINST THIS "AGRESSION"
(LUERS INTERVENED TO SAY THAT WE HAD);

--US REFUSES TO CALL FOR SOMALI WITHDRAWAL FROM
OGADEN;

--THE SOVIETS HAVE LEARNED FROM THE MIDDLE EAST
CONFLICT THE PERILS OF AGREEING TO A FORMULA WHEREBY
MILITARY ACTION CEASES WITHOUT WITHDRAWAL BY THE
AGGRESSOR, IN THIS CASE SOMALIA;

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--THERE ARE US WEAPONS IN ETHIOPIA AND MANY OTHER THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, MUCH MORE WEAPONS THAN THE SOVIETS HAVE EXPORTED, E.G., "TEN BILLION DOLLARS WORTH" OF ARMS TO IRAN WHICH NEIGHBORS THE USSR, AND TO SAUDI ARABIA;

--US "MORAL" APPROACH SEEMS TO BE ONE-SIDED, AS IF IT IS UP TO US TO DECIDE THAT ITS INTERESTS IN A GIVEN AREA ARE VITAL AND THEREFORE US CAN FREELY SUPPLY ARMS (E.G., IRAN, SAUDI ARABIA) WITHOUT PROVOKING CONFLICT, BUT THAT SOVIET INTERESTS IN ANOTHER AREA ARE NOT VITAL AND THEREFORE SOVIETS SHOULDN'T SUPPLY WEAPONS.

5. LUERS COUNTERED THAT:

--SINCE WORLD WAR II, IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA HAD BEEN CLOSE ASSOCIATES OF US., ARE MAJOR OIL PRODUCERS, HAVE NO MILITARY ALLIANCES, AND OBVIOUSLY HAVE NO AGGRESSIVE INTENT AGAINST USSR. FURTHERMORE, OUR LONG EXPERIENCE WITH THEM SHOWS THAT OUR ARMS SUPPLY HAS SERVED TO STABILIZE THE SITUATION; WHEREAS THE SOVIET SUPPLY TO ETHIOPIA WAS A RELATIVELY SUDDEN SHIFT DESIGNED APPARENTLY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AN UNSTABLE SITUATION;

--THE SOVIETS SHOULD SEE THAT IT IS IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST NOT TO SEEK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EACH OTHER IN THE THIRD WORLD. THIRTY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT THIRD WORLD CONFLICTS HAVE PROVIDED LITTLE BENEFIT TO EITHER THE US OR USSR;

--WE REALIZE THE ISSUES ARE VERY COMPLEX TO DEAL WITH BUT SINCE THE END OF THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION AND CERTAINLY IN THE PRESENT ONE OUR POLICY HAS BEEN TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN CONFLICT AREAS;

--WE ARE NOT SEEKING CLIENT STATES IN AFRICA;
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AN AREA OF GREAT POTENTIAL CONFLICT OVER THE NEXT DECADE. OUR HOPE IS FOR POLITICAL SOLUTIONS IN WHICH BOTH THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION CAN PLAY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLES WITHOUT RISKING ENGAGING MILITARY FORCE;

--AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION TENDS TO VIEW SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN ETHIOPIA AS A REPETITION OF THE ANGOLA EXPERIENCE.

6. THE CHARGE INTERVENED TO RECALL THAT UNDER THE 1972 US-SOVIET DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES BOTH SIDES UNDERTOOK TO REFRAIN FROM SEEKING UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE. YET IN ANGOLA THE SOVIETS HAD SIDED WITH ONE FACTION. NOW IN THE HORN THEY HAD DONE A FLIP FLOP IN ORDER TO GAIN UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE. WE VIEWED BOTH CASES AS A VIOLATION OF THE 1972 DECLARATION.

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7. IN REPLY, KORNIYENKO SUGGESTED THAT WE READ THE REPORT BY A COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE ANGOLAN CONFLICT. THIS REPORT, HE INSISTED, CORROBORATES THE SOVIET VERSION: THE SOVIETS FAVORED THE TRIPARTITE COALITION AND SENT NOTHING TO ANGOLA UNTIL THE CIA AND WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES MOVED TO OVERTHROW THAT COALITION AND SOUTH AFRICA BECAME INVOLVED. "THEN WE HELPED THEM FIGHT FOR THEIR FREEDOM". RETURNING TO IRAN, KORNIYENKO SAID THAT IN THE PAST, IRAN HAD BEEN IN CONFLICT OR NEAR CONFLICT WITH IRAQ AND OTHER (UNNAMED) COUNTRIES.

8. COMMENT: A MAJOR THEME IN KORNIYENKO'S DISCUSSION OF THE HORN WAS THE SOVIET UNION'S INSISTENCE UPON BEING TREATED BY THE US AS AN EQUAL. THIS WAS CLEARLY IMPLIED, FOR EXAMPLE, IN HIS ARGUMENT THAT THE US HAS MANY CLIENT STATES TO WHICH IT SUPPLIES

ARMS, BUT WHEN THE SOVIET UNION DEVELOPS SUCH
RELATIONSHIPS, IT IS CRITICIZED BY THE US AS
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TRYING TO SEEK UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE. WHILE STRONGEST
IN LUERS' CONVERSATION WITH KORNIYENKO, THIS SOVIET
PREOCCUPATION WAS EVIDENT IN VIRTUALLY ALL OF LUERS'
OTHER MEETINGS (REPORTED SEPTELS) WITH SOVIET
OFFICIALS.
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